

our Armed Forces today regardless of race, national origin or citizenship status.

S. 1315, today, would restore veterans status to those World War II heroes and, in particular, it would provide pension benefits to aid Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines during their twilight years.

The pension benefits under S. 1315 would amount to less than one-third—to less than one-third—of the basic pension amount provided to veterans living in the United States of America today. The average income of persons residing in the Philippines, however, is considerably lower than their counterparts in the United States. So the pension benefits under S. 1315 would provide a decent standard of living to these veterans.

Our Nation cannot abandon those who have served under our flag and who have served under our command. We must rally in support of these proven friends of America and act to redeem our Nation's debt in honor of their service.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 1315 in its entirety, and to support granting the benefits that the Filipino veterans from World War II, in my view, have earned.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am proud to rise in support of the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. This bill expands much needed and long overdue benefits for the men and women in uniform who have served overseas in difficult and dangerous circumstances to keep America safe.

We must honor our U.S. soldiers who have died in the name of their country. These service men and women are America's true heroes and on this day we pay tribute to their courage and sacrifice by bringing this bill to the Senate floor. Some have given their lives for our country. All have given their time and dedication to ensure our country remains the land of the free and the home of the brave. We owe a special debt of gratitude to each and every one of them.

Our Nation has a sacred commitment to honor the promises made to soldiers when they signed up to serve our country. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I fight hard each year to make sure promises made to our service men and women are promises kept. These promises include access to quality, affordable health care and a proper burial for our veterans.

That is why I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. This bill provides an increase in burial benefits for the families of our wounded or disabled veterans, which I have been fighting for since 2001. This means that service-connected burial benefits will increase by \$2,100 for a total of \$4,100; non service-connected burial benefits will increase by \$900 for a total of \$1,200; and, plot allowances will increase by \$445 for a total of \$745. These benefits will increase annually to keep up with inflation.

I am also proud to support this bill because it takes an important step in recognizing the sacrifices made by our men and women of the National Guard and Reserve by expanding the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, outreach program. This program provides important information about benefits and services that veterans and their spouses, children and parents may be eligible for through the VA. By expanding this program we are ensuring that our citizen soldiers and their families have the resources and help they need to make a successful transition back to civilian life after answering our Nation's call.

This bill also recognizes the sacrifices of veterans who are suffering from the physical, permanent wounds of war. It expands eligibility for traumatic injury insurance and specially adapted housing benefits to veterans with severe burns. It also restores veteran status to Filipino veterans who served under United States command in World War II.

Whether fighting to defend democracy overseas or standing sentry on the home front, America's veterans have been there for us. We have a sacred commitment to honor all of the promises made to them when they signed up to fight for us. That's why I am fighting hard today and everyday in the U.S. Senate to ensure that the federal government maintains its commitment to veterans. Promises made must be promises kept.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1315 AND H.R. 2831

Mr. REID. Mr. President, here we are again not being able to go to the bill. I would hope we could go to this bill tomorrow and debate it all day. As everyone, I think, knows, we would like to have a vote tomorrow night at 6 o'clock on the reversal of the Ledbetter decision.

So I have conferred with the manager of the bill and told him I was going to ask consent that in the morning we have the opportunity to go to the bill and legislate—have people offer amendments on it tomorrow—that we would go at 6 o'clock tomorrow to the cloture vote—the motion has been filed—on the Ledbetter decision. I ask unanimous consent that be the case.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would my friend like me to be a little more specific?

Mr. BURR. I would love for that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, April 23, following a period of morning business, the motion to proceed to S. 1315 be agreed to; and that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on H.R. 2831, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, occur at 6 p.m., with the time from 5 to 6 p.m. equally divided and controlled prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BURR. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. We had a unanimous vote earlier today to proceed to the bill. I believe it has been a productive day. I believe Members have learned a lot in the debate, and I think it is important to get the history of the issue on the record for all Members.

Having said that, I am prepared to begin consideration of the bill and for the amendment process to begin as well. Under the rules, my understanding is the cloture vote on Ledbetter would proceed an hour after we convene.

Now, I am not in a position to delay the Ledbetter bill, but I am in a position to agree to go immediately in the morning to consideration of S. 1315. The way the majority leader has worded his unanimous consent request would push off the rules of the Senate, requiring that the Ledbetter vote be in the morning. So, therefore, I have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think my friend may have misunderstood my consent request. I think it is appropriate—we would not have to have morning business in the morning. We could go directly to the bill in the morning. We could convene at 9:30, 10 o'clock—whatever would be convenient to the minority—and we would legislate on that all day tomorrow, offer amendments. My friend wants to, I am sure, offer an amendment to change the provision in the bill as it relates to Filipinos. That would be fine.

At 6 o'clock we would have a vote on a motion that has already been filed to invoke cloture on Ledbetter. That would take 20 minutes. That is all it would take. And then, if cloture, of course, is invoked, then we would be on Ledbetter. If it were not invoked, then we would be right back on S. 1315.

So again, I say to my friend, I think it is a good idea we go to the legislation in the morning. I wanted to do it Thursday night. We did not do it Thursday night. We did not do it Friday. We did not do it Monday. We have not done it today. So I would hope on Wednesday morning we could do that. That was my consent: We go to that, we take a brief pause at 6 o'clock tomorrow evening to vote on cloture on

Ledbetter. It would take, as I said, no longer than 15 minutes, maybe 20 minutes if somebody is late for the vote, but that is how long it would take.

So that seems appropriate.

Mr. BURR. May I ask a question of the majority leader?

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. BURR. My understanding in the unanimous consent request is that as to the rule that would require us to vote on cloture on the Ledbetter issue 1 hour after we started business tomorrow, under the unanimous consent request, the majority leader has asked that to be postponed until 6:30 tomorrow night. Am I correct?

Mr. REID. Yes. What I did ask is that the vote on Ledbetter would be at 6 o'clock tomorrow.

Mr. BURR. Six o'clock. I apologize.

Mr. REID. The reason being—and it is certainly no secret to anyone—we have a number of Senators who want to vote on that matter, and we would ask that be the schedule.

I would say no one would be inconvenienced with that. If my friends do not accept the consent request I offer, then the only alternative we have is to waste another day because we are postcloture with 30 hours. That time expires at 6 o'clock tomorrow. That is what time it expires. That is why that arbitrary 6 o'clock time was chosen.

As I repeat, Thursday we could have been on the bill. Friday we could have been on the bill. Monday we could have been on the bill. Tuesday we could have been on the bill. As I have indicated—and I am certain my friend has heard some of the statements that have been made today about our not being able to legislate—we have had to invoke cloture so many different times it is difficult to comprehend, but it is approaching 70 times. It would seem to me it would not be a fruitful use of the time not to be in session until 5 o'clock tomorrow. Because under the rules—my friend is right—cloture happens automatically an hour after we come into session. So it is going to happen at 6 o'clock no matter what.

It would seem to me, as to this important piece of legislation, we should be legislating on it from 9:30, 10 o'clock in the morning—whatever time would be convenient to come in. This request I am making is certainly not an unusual request. We almost always, with rare exception, have cloture votes by consent because, as I have indicated, the rules call for cloture votes taking place 1 hour after we come into session.

Today, we set the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 1315—that was by consent. We, with rare exception, do it by consent. It is not as if we are here suddenly trying to invent the wheel.

Simply stated again, Mr. President, I am saying, at 6 o'clock tomorrow, we are going to have a vote on the Ledbetter reversal. Preceding that, we can have a very productive day and work on this veterans bill. Or we can follow the rules and be out of session all day tomorrow and come in at 5 o'clock and have an hour of debate prior to the cloture vote. So it is established we are going to have a cloture

vote at 6 o'clock. The question is, should we have a productive day? We want to have a productive day. We want to legislate over here on this important issue.

I agree with my friend, the distinguished Senator from North Carolina, we have had a good debate today. I was extremely impressed with Senator INOUE's statement. For someone who is a Medal of Honor winner, I think it means a lot coming from him that we all have a misconception of a lot of things that went on in World War II, not the least of which is the Bataan Death March.

In all the movies and everything you see about the Bataan Death March, you see a bunch of White men being driven by the Japanese, many of them to their deaths. That death march had 15,000 Americans and 60,000 Filipinos. That was very educational for me. We have had a number of good statements here today. So I would renew my consent request.

Mr. BURR. Continuing my reservation, Mr. President, as I understand the leader, it is not the minority and it is certainly not me who is suggesting that tomorrow be unproductive; it is the majority leader's desire to change the Senate rules and to move a vote on cloture on the Ledbetter issue from 1 hour after we come into session to 6 o'clock tomorrow night to accommodate people who are not in Washington, supposedly when the Senate is in session.

I think the Senator makes some great observations about the debate today. I agree with him about the heroism of Senator INOUE and others, Senator STEVENS, who performed bravely in the Pacific in World War II, and the debate we have had today. If we have learned anything, it is that we have brave Senators, but we also have the history to look at as to whether this benefit was intended for these individuals. That is why the debate was so important that Senator REID and I discussed earlier yesterday and we continue now. But with the insistence that we change the Senate rules and delay the vote on Ledbetter, I would have to be opposed to the unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate the comments of my friend from North Carolina. The record is very clear. This is a continuation of my friends on the Republican side wanting to accomplish nothing rather than something. I understand that. I accept that. I have gotten used to it.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMEMORATION OF EARTH DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Earth Day has been celebrated on April 22 every year since 1970. Much has changed since then. Americans have grown increasingly aware of importance of environmental stewardship for the wellbeing of our country. New challenges have emerged, though, that we didn't recognize in 1970. New sources of pollution threaten our air and water. In recent weeks, for instance, we have been reminded that there are chemicals and pharmaceuticals entering our waters whose effects on the environment are largely unknown.

Perhaps our most important challenge perhaps the greatest problem mankind has ever faced—is global warming. Disruptive climate change threatens our ecosystems, our national security, and our economy. Landmark laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act have done much to protect America. Now, though, our generation is being asked to step up to save our planet as a whole.

The science is unequivocal: global warming is real and manmade greenhouse gases are the root cause. The scientific debate is over, and the time for action is at hand.

Congress is taking this responsibility seriously. Several bills have been introduced in the 110th Congress that would attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Among them is America's Climate Security Act, the bill crafted by Senators Lieberman and Warner.

The Lieberman-Warner bill has the potential to reduce America's total greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020 and 66 percent by 2050 compared to 2005 levels. These cuts would restore U.S. leadership in international climate change negotiations and help avoid the worst consequences of global warming.

There is no doubt. We need to start cutting greenhouse gases now. What have we heard from the White House on this? Last week, President Bush said America's goal should be to start to reduce the rate of greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. Representative EDWARD MARKEY, chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, described the plan this way. The President's short-term plan for global warming is: Do nothing. His intermediate plan is: Do nothing much. And his long-term plan is: Do nothing close to what is required to avoid global catastrophe.

The White House plan is not nearly good enough. As global warming progresses we can expect more coastal